

**Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) Advisory Group Meeting #4**  
**Thursday, February 11, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 PM**  
**City Hall, Sister Cities Conference Room**

**February 11, 2016 ADVISORY GROUP DRAFT MEETING NOTES**  
**(02.20.2016 DRAFT)**

**I. INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING**

- A. Park and Recreation Commission Appointee:** Chairperson Maria Wasowski introduced the new Advisory Group Member, Jesse O'Connell, representative of the Park and Recreation Commission.
- B. OTN SAP Advisory Group Meeting #3 Notes:** The Summary Meeting Notes for Advisory Group Meetings #3 were finalized with no edits and will be uploaded, as final, onto the OTN SAP Update webpage.
- C. Acknowledgement/Appreciation Presentation to AREP:** On behalf of the Advisory Group and City of Alexandria, Chairperson Maria Wasowski presented American Real Estate Partners (AREP) with a plaque in appreciation for hosting the Old Town North Charrette in donated space this past November at Canal Center. Advisory Group Member Jeff Strup from AREP accepted the plaque on behalf of AREP.
- D. Fourth Thursday agreed to as the new OTN SAP Advisory Group Standing Monthly Meeting Date:** The Advisory Group reached consensus on a new monthly standing meeting date of the fourth Thursday of the month. The previously chosen standing meeting date of the fourth Monday conflicts with the Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority monthly board meetings.
- E. Updates to OTN SAP Members' Binders:** An Updated OTN SAP Subcommittee Membership Matrix, an updated OTN SAP Advisory Group Members' list and an updated OTN SAP Advisory Group Members' map were distributed to the Advisory Group for insertion into their binders, noting that previous copies of these items can be discarded.

**II. FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> REPORT OUTS FROM THE FOLLOWING SUBCOMMITTEES**

- A. Planning, Land Use, and Design & Housing Subcommittee**
- B. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee**

Chair Maria Wasowski reminded the Advisory Group that we are now in Phases II (Study) and III (Testing) of the overall OTN SAP Update planning process. Under these phases, the Advisory Group has organized itself into four Subcommittees (see the Subcommittee Matrix as updated and distributed for this meeting) with each Subcommittee to meet at least twice over the four months between January and April 2016 to provide staff with guidance in the exploration of the feasibility of concepts/ideas which came out of Phase I (Plan Framework/Visioning Phase) and

which pertain to the respective planning category (ies) for which the four Subcommittees are responsible. The Subcommittees will have an intervening month between their two meetings during which assigned staff will undertake the study/testing tasks for their assigned planning category (ies).

**SUBCOMMITTEE PROCESS:** The following is inserted to further describe the Subcommittee process under Phases II (Study) and III (Testing):

**Planning, Land Use and Design and Housing Subcommittee**

- January 20, 2016: Initial Subcommittee Meeting.
- February 2016: Staff Study/Testing of the Concepts/Ideas under the given Planning Categories for which the Subcommittee is responsible.
- February 11, 2016: Subcommittee's Initial Report Out to the full Advisory Group.
- March 10, 2016: Second Subcommittee Meeting.
- March 24, 2016: Report Out of Findings/Preliminary Recommendations to the Full Advisory Group for the full Advisory Group's Discussion.

**Parks, Recreation, Cultural Facilities & Historic Preservation**

- January 20, 2016: Initial Subcommittee Meeting.
- February 2016: Staff Study/Testing of the Concepts/Ideas under the given Planning Categories for which the Subcommittee is responsible.
- February 11, 2016: Subcommittee's Initial Report Out to the full Advisory Group.
- March 10, 2016: Second Subcommittee Meeting.
- March 24, 2016: Report Out of Findings/Preliminary Recommendations to the Full Advisory Group for the full Advisory Group's Discussion.

**Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee**

- February 10, 2016: Initial Subcommittee Meeting.
- March 2016: Staff Study/Testing of Concepts/Ideas under the given Planning Categories for which the Subcommittee is responsible.
- March 24, 2016: Subcommittee's Initial Report Out to the full Advisory Group.
- April 13, 2016: Second Subcommittee Meeting.
- April 28, 2016: Report Out of Findings/Preliminary Recommendations to the Full Advisory Group for the full Advisory Group's Discussion.

**Economic Development Subcommittee**

- February 10, 2016: Initial Subcommittee Meeting.
- March 2016: Staff Study/Testing of Concepts/Ideas under the given Planning Categories for which the Subcommittee is responsible.
- March 24, 2016: Subcommittee's Initial Report Out to the full Advisory Group.
- April 20, 2016: Second Subcommittee Meeting.
- April 28, 2016: Report Out of Findings/Preliminary Recommendations to the full Advisory Group for Discussion.

## **Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee: Report Out**

Subcommittee Co-Chairs Maria Wasowski and Kevin Harris reviewed the discussion items resulting from the initial Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee meeting held on January 20, 2016, noting the general guidance to staff in the study/testing month (March) as follows:

- **Planning and Land Use**
  - **Land Use Balance:** 2015 balance is a good measuring stick and seems economically viable.
  - **Height:** Existing context should be taken into account when exploring appropriate heights. Problematic to place low scale next to existing higher scale. Should include buffers and transitions between areas of higher and lower heights/uses.
  - **Ground floor Activation:** Ground floor activation is important. It often requires higher ceilings and overall more height which should be taken into consideration.
  - **FAR:** To achieve right variety of height and ground floor activity, incentives, which could translate to FAR, will need to be considered.
  - **Community Space:** Explore options for interior and exterior community space. For onsite internal space, look to community rooms. For exterior onsite public space consider relationship to street vs courtyard. For multi-purpose community/cultural space, explore a multi-purpose facility, serving a variety of needs in an appropriate location.
  - **Office Conversions:** An office conversion policy is needed and should be part of or tangential to this process
  - **Land Use Flexibility:** Remember that flexibility is an important factor in land use because use is driven by the market.
  - **Innovative District:** The Charrette identified NRG as a possible Innovative area. Explore what that could mean in terms of a possible signature use for that area that the owner/developer might be open to considering within the context of a mixed use environment.
- **Existing Urban Design Goals and Guidelines:** Great tools in the 1992 OTN SAP and 1994 OTN Design Guidelines. Review and, if necessary, clarify and strengthen if and where appropriate.
- **Potential Urban Design Enhancements for Existing Blank Walls and Surface Parking Lots** (e.g., Active Liners, Landscape Screeners, Art/Light Walls, Infill):
  - **Outreach to property owners is a must relative to potential Urban Design Enhancements:** Not all property owners may want to modify their property *or* be ready to modify their property *or* they may need some form of technical or other assistance or incentive to help motivate them.
  - **Phasing of potential Urban Design Enhancements:** Explore short term and long term options. Example, perhaps landscape enhancements in some cases may be short term, mid-term or long-term, depending on the lifespan of the improvement.
  - **Incentives for potential Urban Design Enhancements:** Explore possible incentives to promote urban design enhancements for existing parcels.
  - **Time Element for potential Urban Design Enhancements:** Strategies should be tailored for daylight and night time benefit, depending on location.

- **Housing**

- **Housing Affordability:** Examine opportunities for promoting a mix of incomes, stakeholders (young people, elderly, families, artists), and housing types within the community.
- **Design of Mixed Income Developments:** Good design of mixed-income developments is very important. Proper care should be afforded to such elements as the courtyard, parking garage, unit location and design. Also, the operation of a mixed income development is important. Both the design and operation can help create and maintain a harmonious, respectful environment for all residents.
- **Housing Affordability Tools:** To achieve housing affordability a mix of tools is important – regulatory - including FAR, financial and other. Look to see if we have what is needed to achieve goal.

**Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee: Advisory Group Discussion**

**Question:** If a property owner wants to convert, are they required to go to the City Council?

**Response:** In some cases they only need a building permit which would not be a policy issue. If the property owner needs approval for open space, exterior renovations, or a change in FAR, then that would trigger a public hearing.

**Comment:** If we want to encourage liner buildings on parking lots and activate the ground floor then we need to think about whether to count the FAR or Gross Square Footage (GSF). We want ground floor uses to be available in the future and ground floor retail typically needs higher ceilings. We do not want to penalize developers for having ground floor retail.

**Staff Comment:** Agree with counting GSF which is a measure that is more understandable. FAR can be tricky to measure.

**Staff Comment:** Some buildings look different even though they may have the same FAR. We need language that makes it clear what the community is expecting.

**Comment:** Old Town North is considered a mixed-use area which is the charm of it. This is starting to change due to office conversions which might not be bad for the community as long as we add more retail. OTN needs an identity. That is starting to happen with new developments, and their architectural style which may start to give an identity to OTN. The next steps would be to look at the NRG site. We need to generate input on how that site transition occurs and what we are looking for there.

**Comment:** Would like to know how property owners of office buildings view streetscapes.

**Response:** From an office developer's perspective, walkability and amenities within walking distance is important.

**Comment:** We need to explore incentives for property owners who might need to invest in streetscape improvements without a full redevelopment of their property.

**Question:** A bill recently approved by the Virginia Senate restricts development proffers. Will that affect the ideas proposed through the OTN SAP Update planning process? **Response:** The bill limits the ability of the government to accept proffers from residential developers for offsite impacts. In the City of Alexandria, we typically do not use proffers. We instead use staff conditions on Development Special Use Permits (DSUPs) which reduces the impact of this bill on the City. However, we will monitor it.

**Comment:** There is a need for a community/cultural center. Look at ways to consolidate activities in a multi-purpose center that is appropriately located. Also linkage and connectivity is important.

**Comment:** Through the eco-district and smart growth concept, focus on efficiency of buildings and tie that to FAR. **Response:** The Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee will be discussing the eco-district concept.

**Comment:** Before we go too far with the idea of a sculpture garden in the Alexandria House Park, we need to approach the Alexandria House board sooner rather than later.

**Comment:** Setting the zoning right on the NRG site will help the property owners to proceed with an intelligent and informed approach on what the City and community prefers. NOTICE did a survey which resulted in people identifying open space on the Waterfront, along with connectivity and access to the development, as important.

**Public Comment:** Public comments on this section are incorporated in the above documentation of comments and questions.

### **Parks, Recreation and Cultural Facilities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee: Report Out**

Co-Chairs Christa Watters and Chip Carlin reviewed the discussion items resulting from the initial Parks, Recreation and Cultural Facilities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee meeting held on January 20, 2016, noting the general guidance to staff in the study/testing month (March) as follows:

#### **Parks and Recreation and Cultural Activities**

- **Cultural Activities**
  - **Exterior Programming** - Location of outside programming should take into consideration that OTN is in the flight path.
  - **Existing Arts Institutions** – A compelling reason for an arts/entertainment area in OTN is to help preserve both the Art League and Metro Stage as community assets. Do not necessarily need a designated Arts District, as defined by the Commonwealth.
  - **Sculpture Park** – Discuss the notion of any proposals for Alexandria House Park with the owner before exploring the concept further.
  - **NOTICE Suvey and Vision** – The NOTICE Vision calls for establishing this area as a cultural center, given its existing cultural facilities and richness.

- **Parks**
  - **Build and coordinate with the Waterfront Plan** – Continuous pathways, street end gardens, cultural theme areas, integration of art and history, as included for the Waterfront under the [Waterfront Plan](#).
  - **Size of Open Space:** A combination of small and consolidated spaces in the area is likely the best approach depending on the level of participation by property owners.
  - **Critical Outreach** - Important to be careful about recommendations relating to private property; should have the concurrence of the property owners.
  - **NOTICE Survey and Vision** – Community members recommend a mix of uses for NRG, including open spaces, particularly along the water.
- **History Plan**
  - **Waterfront Plan** – Develop a History Plan. Use the [Waterfront History Plan](#) as template and the [OLIN art/history map](#) (slides 118-120).
  - **Multi-Purpose Tool** - Should be a tool that helps identifies OTN historic resources and historic buildings and that can be of value to a variety of users, including locations and types of public art for public spaces and art for private developments.

**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Facilities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee: Advisory Group Discussion**

**Comment:** Connectivity of parks and open spaces is important along with connectivity to surrounding communities and to Braddock Metro station.

**Question:** It is also important to involve the National Park Service (NPS). Are there any updates on the Daingerfield Island Master Plan? **Response:** The Daingerfield Island Master Plan will be pursued as part of the agreement between the City and NPS for the Potomac Yard Metro. The City is awaiting a timeline from NPS. NPS is involved in this process with attendance by their staff at OTN SAP Update related meetings as their schedules allow. They called to say they were not able to attend this meeting but the City will be updating them shortly.

**Comment:** If we want open space along the Waterfront we would need to have taller buildings closer to the Parkway. It will be important to have discussions with the Parkway officials.

**Comment:** The Waterfront Plan shows significant open space in front of every Waterfront Development. Thus, there is a precedent for continuing that strip.

**Comment:** We need to specify where passive and active recreational use for open spaces should occur, such as boating.

**Comment:** In addition to a linear park along the Waterfront, it would be nice to have perpendicular parks that open street end views to the Waterfront (OLIN's street end gardens under the Waterfront Plan).

**Comment:** The functionality of parks is also important. Restrooms should be an integral part of park designs. **Response:** Good point. The [draft Neighborhood Park Improvement Plan](#) by the

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) department includes those components. The Park and Recreation Commission endorsed the plan on November 19, 2015 ([endorsement letter](#)) and City Council will receive the plan at its Legislative Session on March 8, 2016 (previously scheduled for January 26, 2016).

**Comment:** There are many rail spurs in Alexandria and we should explore an opportunity to put them to use. **Response:** Staff has reached out to the railroad and expects to communicate with them again to learn more about the spurs and the railroad's intention relative to the spurs.

**Comment:** The signs for memorializing historic sites need to be better funded and maintained.

**Comment:** Open spaces and parks also fall into disrepair and need to be properly maintained; a maintenance/operations plan will be important as part of implementation for the OTN SAP Update.

**Comment:** A variety of park uses is important as well as the functional element in parks. We might consider play spots, water elements and skate parks, getting to the idea of distinguishing between passive and active recreational space.

**Comment:** The Waterfront Plan includes opening up the foot of King Street more to the water. There is an opportunity to make the east/west connections wider at OTN's street ends to open the view to the Waterfront with more active uses, again, like OLIN's schematic design under the Waterfront Plan for street end gardens.

**Comment:** The Del Ray community has a lot of identity through the relationships between the residents and a strong neighborhood association. Hope that through the OTN SAP Update process, people living in OTN would get more energized through civic participation.

**Comment:** Del Ray is a linear community along Mt Vernon Avenue which helps create its identity.

**Comment:** The retail focus areas and Montgomery Street becoming a main street would help with the identity of Old Town North.

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR JANUARY TO MAY 2016 (*Locations to be confirmed*)**

- **Planning, Design and Land Use and Housing Subcommittee**  
March 9, 2016, 8:00 – 10:00 AM
- **Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities and Historic Preservation Subcommittee** - March 9, 2016, 4:00 – 6:00 PM
- **Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee**  
April 13, 2016, 5:00 – 7:00 PM

- **Economic Development Subcommittee**

April, 20, 2016, (Afternoon with the time to be confirmed)

**Advisory Group Attendance – Meeting of February 11, 2016**

- Maria Wasowski, Chair (Planning Commission and Transportation Commission)
- Steven Arabia (Property Owner Representative)
- Engin Artemel (Community Representative – At Large)
- Anna Bentley (Community Representative – At Large)
- Chip Carlin (Board of Architectural Review – Old & Historic District)
- Herbert J. (Herb) Cooper-Levy (Community Representative - At Large)
- Krista Di Iaconi (Property Owner Representative)
- Steven Goodman (HOA/Community Representative)
- Kevin Harris (Community Representative – Alexandria Redevelopment& Housing Authority Residents)
- Bruce M. Machanic (Business Representative)
- Carlos Mejias (Business Representative)
- Jesse O’Connell (Park and Recreation Commission Representative)
- Thomas Soapes (Community Representative - NOTICE)
- Jeff Strup (Property Owner Representative)
- Marie McKenney Tavernini (Urban Design Advisory Committee)
- Christa Watters (Community Representative – Homeowner Associations/At-Large)